

Message Text

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ACTION INR-11

INFO OCT-01 NEA-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 RSC-01 INRE-00

SS-20 SSO-00 DRC-01 /048 W

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O 251240Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1532

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 2076

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, PFOR, SY

SUBJ: REQUEST FOR BIO INFORMATION

REF: STATE 210146

1. (UNCLASSIFIED) FAWZI AL-KAYYALI, MINISTER OF CULTURE AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE: SUNNI MOSLEM; BORN IN 1923 AT KAFAR TAKHARIM IN MUHAFAZAT OF IDLIB; LAWYER; HEAD OF ARAB SOCIALIST UNION PARTY (ASU), ONE OF PARTIES ALLIED WITH BAATH PARTY IN THE NATIONAL PROGRESSIVE FRONT; ONE OF TWO ASU PARTY MEMBERS IN CURRENT CABINET (OTHER IS MINISTER OF STATE ANWAR HAMADEH). KAYYALI WAS MINISTER OF CULTURE, TOURISM, AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE IN ASAD CABINET (NOVEMBER 21, 1970) AND SUBSEQUENT FIRST KHLAYFAWI CABINET (APRIL 3, 1971). AFTER CREATION OF SEPARATE MINISTRY OF TOURISM IN SECOND KHLAYFAWI CABINET (MARCH 3, 1972), KAYYWLI CONTINUED TO HOLD PORTFOLIO OF CULTURE AND NATIONAL GUIDANCE.

2. (UNCLASSIFIED) AHMAD ISKANDAR AHMAD, MINISTER OF INFORMATION: ALAWITE; BORN IN 1944 IN VILLAGE OF ASHIQ UMAR (NEAR HOMS); BAATH PARTY MEMBER; JOURNALIST AND POLITICAL WRITER BY PROFESSION; HOLDS BA DEGREE IN LITERATURE (DOCUMENTATION AND LIBRARIES) FROM CAIRO UNIVERSITY; MARRIED WITH ONE DAUGHTER. AHMAD SPENT SOME TIME IN EAST GERMANY AS STUDENT IN JOURNALISM; HE WAS THAT TIME POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT OF SANA (SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY). FROM 1965 TO 1971 HE WORKED IN MINISTRY OF INFORMATION; DURING LAST THREE OR FOUR YEARS
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HE WAS DIRECTOR OF SANA. ON SEPTEMBER 16, 1971 HE WAS TRANS-

FERRED TO AL WADA PUBLISHING HOUSE, GOVERNMENT CORPORATION WHICH PUBLISHES NEWSPAPER AL-THAWRA AND BECAME FIRST DIRECTOR GENERAL THEN ON JANUARY 6, 1973 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THIS NEWSPAPER. HIS APPOINTMENT ON SEPTEMBER 1, 1974 AS MINISTER OF INFORMATION IS HIS FIRST MINISTERIAL ASSIGNMENT. AHMAD SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH.

3. COMMENT: (BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL) EMBASSY KNOWS LITTLE MORE ON KAYYALI THAN THAT MENTIONED ABOVE. AHMAD IS SELF-ASSURED, SOMEWHAT COCKY INDIVIDUAL WHO THOROUGHLY ENJOYS HIS OWN IMPORTANCE. AS EDITOR OF AL-THAWRA, HE RAN HIS NEWSPAPER WITH THE CEREMONY OF A DIPLOMATIC ESTABLISHMENT -- DOORS OPENED THE MOMENT ONE ARRIVED, SEPARATE ESCORTS ONE FLOOR TO ANOTHER, CALLING CARDS LEFT AT THE DOOR, AND HERALDED ENTRY INTO THE EDITOR'S OFFICE. STYLE IS VERY IMPORTANT TO HIM. HE ENJOYS DISCUSSIONS ON POLITICAL ISSUES AND DOES NOT SHY AWAY FROM CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. HE LIKES ASKING DIFFICULT, BAITING QUESTIONS AND ENJOYS DEBATING POINTS. REGARDING US, AHMAD OPENLY STATES HIS DISBELIEF THAT US WILL EVER BE GOOD FRIEND TO ARABS BECAUSE WE WILL ALWAYS IN THE END SUPPORT ISRAELIS REGARDLESS OF WHO IS RIGHT. SAYS HE HOPES THERE CAN BE PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, BUT DOES NOT BELIEVE SECRETARY WILL BE SUCCESSFUL. (END CONFIDENTIAL)
MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974DAMASC02076
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740270-0053
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740916/aaaaanis.tel
Line Count: 86
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: STATE 210146
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 15 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <15-Aug-2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <05 MAR 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REQUEST FOR BIO INFORMATION
TAGS: PINR, PFOR, SY, (AL-KAYYALI, FAWZI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005